

Statement to the USCC

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (CA-46)

The PRC today is a totalitarian country, seeking to become a totalitarian empire. Since Mao, the PRC has subjugated their ethnic and religious minorities and repressed anyone who sought political or cultural ends not deemed proper by the Communist leadership. China remains the world's worst human rights abuser. Today, the PRC is spreading its influence and domination throughout the region, particularly in Southeast Asia. The economic and technological gains China has made in the last decades is now making possible a major expansion of its military power.

The PLA Navy, for example, is in the process of fortifying Hainan Island, constructing a large naval base at Sanya. This base will allow the Chinese surface vessels and attack submarines to project power and threaten its neighbors. Likewise, China has extended an airfield on Woody Island in the Paracel islands, built up its facilities at Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly archipelago, and has maintained a naval presence at Mischief Reef off the west coast of the Philippines. These threatening positions give the PRC considerable leverage over its neighbors and threaten vital shipping routes. It also allows the PRC, for example, to contest control of the vital Strait of Malacca; which is the lifeline of shipping transiting between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. Japan is also becoming vulnerable to Chinese military capabilities that did not exist 25 years ago.

At times the military buildup on the part of the PRC has erupted into very aggressive acts against US Navy ships. In 2007 a Chinese diesel-electric attack submarine surfaced in the middle of a Pacific exercise close to the USS Kitty Hawk, a very dramatic move near an American aircraft carrier. In March of 2009 the USNS Impeccable was intercepted by several Chinese vessels, and over flown by PRC military aircraft. Some of the ships crossed the Impeccable's path at dangerously close distances and attempted to interfere with the ships towed sonar array. The Impeccable was forced to take evasive action to avoid hitting one of these ships. When radio contact was established, the PLAN ship told the US Navy ship to leave or "suffer the consequences." In June of 2009 the destroyer USS John S. McCain was sailing in the South China Sea when a Chinese submarine collided with an underwater sonar array that the USS John McCain was towing. There can be no mistaking what these moves mean. The PRC is aggressively signaling through their actions, claiming dominance and control over the South China Sea. And if the Chinese military is threatening the navy of a powerful country like that of the United States, one can only image the threat to more vulnerable countries.

The PRC continues to have a variety of disputes with its neighboring countries. The Chinese continue to claim the Spratly Islands, which are over 1,000 nautical miles from its coast, over the strong objections of the both the Philippines and Taiwan which are both considerably closer to the Spratlys. PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu asserted in 2009 that "China possesses indisputable sovereignty" over those islands. Ironically the PRC speaks out of both sides of its mouth because it also claims to want to promote "harmonious" relations with its neighbors.

In May of 2009 the PRC closed a large portion of the South China Sea to fishing for three months, at the height of the fishing season, which caused great difficulty for fisherman in

Vietnam. To enforce the fishing ban the PRC boarded Vietnamese ships in the area and detained some crews. This led to a major diplomatic row. Vietnam is rightly very wary of its northern neighbor and has turned to the Russians to beef up their military hardware. Vietnam has become Russians biggest arms buyer, recently purchasing 6 Kilo class submarines and 13 Su-30 advanced jets.

Of all the countries in Asia, perhaps the most “friendly” relationship the PRC has is with the gangster regime that now controls Burma. China has armed the Burmese junta to the teeth and in exchange it has ripped off the Burmese people, taking their great natural resources.

China is an aggressive nation which has fought many wars for territorial gain. Today China is willing and increasingly able to flex its muscle in support of its desires in Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Right now the PLA Navy is deploying attack submarines and surface ships, but they are also developing anti-satellite missiles and anti-ship ballistic missiles. Even if China does not intend to fight the US directly, they want to have the capacity to deny us the ability to come to the aid and defense of our regional allies, leaving them to China’s mercy.

I remind the Commission that there is a reason the CCP’s leadership has taken to calling the 21st century the “Chinese century.” They are acting aggressively, arrogantly laying claim to almost 80% of the South China Sea. No one can doubt their territorial ambitions; no one can deny the brutal and totalitarian nature of their regime. No one can deny their massive military buildup, aimed at the US and the countries of Southeast Asia. We ignore it at our own peril. No standing army today threatens China. The PRC’s build up can only be taken as offensive posturing on their part. Their actions are only confined by the limits of their brute force and power.

Taken together, the PRC’s words and deeds should be cause for great concern in the US. The situation is not dissimilar to the pre-World War One Japanese mindset that they had a right to dominate this region of the world. The only difference is that the PRC’s goals are much more ambitious than dominating just the region.